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JJGJR.: 08-07

Paper No:

COPY MAILED

AUG 27 2007

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

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In re Application of :
Muller, et al. : DECISION
Application No. 09/764,366 :
Filing Date: 18 January, 2001 :
Attorney Docket No.: 060967-0014 :
:

This is a decision on the petition filed on 14 August, 2006, as a request for withdrawal of the holding of abandonment under 37 C.F.R. §1.181, alternatively, to revive the instant application under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) as having been abandoned due to unavoidable delay.

The Office regrets the delay in addressing this matter, however, the instant petition was presented to the attorneys in the Office of Petitions only at this writing.¹

For the reasons set forth below, the petition as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 is **DISMISSED**, however, the petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is **GRANTED**.

BACKGROUND

The record reflects that:

- Petitioner failed to reply timely and properly to the non-final Office action mailed 25

¹ **NOTE:** Monitoring of the status of applications on PAIR can inform one's management of application responses and provide an indication when mailings of Office actions should be expected. Status Inquiries filed at three (3) or four (4) month intervals provide a demonstration of diligence and attention in supporting a petition seeking relief under 37 C.F.R. §1.181.

March, 2005, with reply due absent an extension of time on or before Monday, 27 June, 2005;

- the application went abandoned by operation of law after midnight 25 June, 2005;
- the Office mailed the Notice of Abandonment on 7 October, 2005;
- on 17 March, 2006, Petitioner filed the original petition and alleged the timely filing of a reply in the form of an amendment filed over a 26 September, 2005, certificate of mailing (with request and fee for extension of time), and provided a copy thereof, with a portion of a date stamped receipt card (see: MPEP §503²)—Petitioner's problem, however, was that Petitioner ignored the requirement for pleading the original petition within two (2) months of the act complained of³—failing satisfaction of the Rule, Petitioner's alternatives

² MPEP §503 provides in pertinent part:

§503 Application Number and Filing Receipt

* * *

A return postcard should be attached to *each* patent application for which a receipt is desired. It is important that the return postcard itemize all of the components of the application. If the postcard does not itemize each of the components of the application, it will not serve as evidence that any component which was not itemized was received by the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). It should be recognized that the identification of an application by application number does not necessarily signify that the USPTO has accepted the application as complete (37 C.F.R. §1.53(a)).

* * *

RETURN POSTCARD

If a receipt of any item (e.g., paper or fee) filed in the USPTO is desired, it may be obtained by enclosing with the paper a self-addressed postcard specifically identifying the item. The USPTO will stamp the receipt date on the postcard and place it in the outgoing mail. A postcard receipt which itemizes and properly identifies the items which are being filed serves as *prima facie* evidence of receipt in the USPTO of all the items listed thereon on the date stamped thereon by the USPTO.

The identifying data on the postcard should be so complete as to clearly identify the item for which receipt is requested. For example, the postcard should identify the applicant's name, application number (if known), confirmation number (if known), filing date, interference number, title of the invention, etc. The postcard should also identify the type of paper being filed, e.g., new application, affidavit, amendment, notice of appeal, appeal brief, drawings, fees, motions, supplemental oath or declaration, petition, etc., and the number of pages being submitted. If a new application is being filed, all parts of the application being submitted should be separately listed on the postcard, e.g., the number of pages of specification (including written description, claims and abstract), number of claims, number of sheets of drawings, number of pages of oath/declaration, number of pages of cover sheet (provisional application).

The postcard receipt will not serve as *prima facie* evidence of receipt of any item which is not adequately itemized on the postcard. For example, merely listing on the postcard "a complete application" or "patent application" will not serve as a proper receipt for each of the required components of an application (e.g., specification (including claims), drawings (if necessary), oath or declaration and the application filing fee) or missing portions (e.g., pages, sheets of drawings) of an application if one of the components or portion of a component is found to be missing by the USPTO. Each separate component should be specifically and properly itemized on the postcard. Furthermore, merely incorporating by reference in the postcard receipt, the items listed in a transmittal letter will not serve as *prima facie* evidence of receipt of those items.

The person receiving the item(s) in the USPTO will check the listing on the postcard against the item(s) being filed to be sure they are properly identified and that all the items listed on the postcard are presently being submitted to the USPTO. If any of the items listed on the postcard are not being submitted to the USPTO, those items will be crossed off and the postcard initialed by the person receiving the items. Upon return of a postcard receipt from the USPTO, the postcard receipt should be promptly reviewed by the person who filed the items to ensure that every item specifically denoted on the postcard was received by the USPTO. If the postcard receipt has been annotated to indicate that a particular item denoted on the postcard was not received by the USPTO, the postcard receipt will not serve as *prima facie* evidence of receipt of that item in the USPTO. (Emphasis supplied.)

³ The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.181 provide:

§ 1.181 Petition to the Director.

(a) Petition may be taken to the Director:

were petitions under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) or (b), and for those reasons the petition was dismissed on 12 June, 2006;

- the instant petitions seek to overcome these deficiencies, and while the delay between the act complained of and the seeking of relief bars relief under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. §1.181, as indicated above, relief is available under 37 C.F.R. §1.137, and Petitioner has alleged unavoidable delay under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a), filed a petition and fee therefor, made a showing in satisfaction thereof, and has submitted a reply in the form of an amendment.

Out of an abundance of caution, Petitioners always are reminded that the filing of a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 does not toll any periods that may be running any action by the Office and a petition seeking relief under the regulation must be filed within two (2) months of the act complained of (see: 37 C.F.R. §1.181(f)); and those registered to practice *and* all others who make representations before the Office must inquire into the underlying facts of representations made to the Office and support averments with the appropriate documentation—since all owe to the Office the continuing duty to disclose.⁴

(1) From any action or requirement of any examiner in the *ex parte* prosecution of an application, or in *ex parte* or *inter partes* prosecution of a reexamination proceeding which is not subject to appeal to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences or to the court;

(2) In cases in which a statute or the rules specify that the matter is to be determined directly by or reviewed by the Director; and

(3) To invoke the supervisory authority of the Director in appropriate circumstances. For petitions involving action of the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences, see § 41.3 of this title.

(b) Any such petition must contain a statement of the facts involved and the point or points to be reviewed and the action requested. Briefs or memoranda, if any, in support thereof should accompany or be embodied in the petition; and where facts are to be proven, the proof in the form of affidavits or declarations (and exhibits, if any) must accompany the petition.

(c) When a petition is taken from an action or requirement of an examiner in the *ex parte* prosecution of an application, or in the *ex parte* or *inter partes* prosecution of a reexamination proceeding, it may be required that there have been a proper request for reconsideration (§ 1.111) and a repeated action by the examiner. The examiner may be directed by the Director to furnish a written statement, within a specified time, setting forth the reasons for his or her decision upon the matters averred in the petition, supplying a copy to the petitioner.

(d) Where a fee is required for a petition to the Director the appropriate section of this part will so indicate. If any required fee does not accompany the petition, the petition will be dismissed.

(e) Oral hearing will not be granted except when considered necessary by the Director.

(f) The mere filing of a petition will not stay any period for reply that may be running against the application, nor act as a stay of other proceedings. Any petition under this part not filed within two months of the mailing date of the action or notice from which relief is requested may be dismissed as untimely, except as otherwise provided. This two-month period is not extendable.

(g) The Director may delegate to appropriate Patent and Trademark Office officials the determination of petitions.

[24 FR 10332, Dec. 22, 1959; 34 FR 18857, Nov. 26, 1969; paras. (d) and (g), 47 FR 41278, Sept. 17, 1982, effective Oct. 1, 1982; para. (a), 49 FR 48416, Dec. 12, 1984, effective Feb. 11, 1985; para. (f) revised, 65 FR 54604, Sept. 8, 2000, effective Nov. 7, 2000; paras. (a) and (c) revised, 65 FR 76756, Dec. 7, 2000, effective Feb. 5, 2001; paras. (a), (a)(2)-(3), (c)-(e) & (g) revised, 68 FR 14332, Mar. 25, 2003, effective May 1, 2003; para. (a)(3) revised, 69 FR 49959, Aug. 12, 2004, effective Sept. 13, 2004] (Emphasis supplied.)

⁴ See supplement of 17 June, 1999. The Patent and Trademark Office is relying on petitioner's duty of candor and good faith and accepting a statement made by Petitioner. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53160 and 53178, 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 88 and 103 (responses to comments 64 and 109)(applicant obligated under 37 C.F.R. §10.18 to inquire into the underlying facts and circumstances when providing statements to the Patent and Trademark Office).

Specifically, the regulations at 37 C.F.R. §10.18 provide:

§ 10.18 Signature and certificate for correspondence filed in the Patent and Trademark Office.

(a) For all documents filed in the Office in patent, trademark, and other non-patent matters, except for correspondence that is required to be

STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Congress has authorized the Commissioner to "revive an application if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable." 35 U.S.C. §133 (1994).⁵

The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) and (b) set forth the requirements for a petitioner to revive a previously unavoidably or unintentionally, respectively, abandoned application under this congressional grant of authority.

The language of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is clear, unambiguous, and without qualification: the delay in tendering the reply to the outstanding Office action, as well as filing the first petition seeking revival, must have been unavoidable for the reply now to be accepted on

signed by the applicant or party, each piece of correspondence filed by a practitioner in the Patent and Trademark Office must bear a signature by such practitioner complying with the provisions of §1.4(d), §1.4(e), or § 2.193(c)(1) of this chapter.

(b) By presenting to the Office (whether by signing, filing, submitting, or later advocating) any paper, the party presenting such paper, whether a practitioner or non-practitioner, is certifying that—

(1) All statements made therein of the party's own knowledge are true, all statements made therein on information and belief are believed to be true, and all statements made therein are made with the knowledge that whoever, in any matter within the jurisdiction of the Patent and Trademark Office, knowingly and willfully falsifies, conceals, or covers up by any trick, scheme, or device a material fact, or makes any false, fictitious or fraudulent statements or representations, or makes or uses any false writing or document knowing the same to contain any false, fictitious or fraudulent statement or entry, shall be subject to the penalties set forth under 18 U.S.C. 1001, and that violations of this paragraph may jeopardize the validity of the application or document, or the validity or enforceability of any patent, trademark registration, or certificate resulting therefrom; and

(2) To the best of the party's knowledge, information and belief, formed after an inquiry reasonable under the circumstances, that —

(i) The paper is not being presented for any improper purpose, such as to harass someone or to cause unnecessary delay or needless increase in the cost of prosecution before the Office;

(ii) The claims and other legal contentions therein are warranted by existing law or by a nonfrivolous argument for the extension, modification, or reversal of existing law or the establishment of new law;

(iii) The allegations and other factual contentions have evidentiary support or, if specifically so identified, are likely to have evidentiary support after a reasonable opportunity for further investigation or discovery; and

(iv) The denials of factual contentions are warranted on the evidence, or if specifically so identified, are reasonably based on a lack of information or belief.

(c) Violations of paragraph (b)(1) of this section by a practitioner or non-practitioner may jeopardize the validity of the application or document, or the validity or enforceability of any patent, trademark registration, or certificate resulting therefrom. Violations of any of paragraphs (b)(2)(i) through (iv) of this section are, after notice and reasonable opportunity to respond, subject to such sanctions as deemed appropriate by the Commissioner, or the Commissioner's designee, which may include, but are not limited to, any combination of —

(1) Holding certain facts to have been established;

(2) Returning papers;

(3) Precluding a party from filing a paper, or presenting or contesting an issue;

(4) Imposing a monetary sanction;

(5) Requiring a terminal disclaimer for the period of the delay; or

(6) Terminating the proceedings in the Patent and Trademark Office.

(d) Any practitioner violating the provisions of this section may also be subject to disciplinary action. See § 10.23(c)(15).

[Added 50 FR 5175, Feb. 6, 1985, effective Mar. 8, 1985; para. (a) revised, 58 FR 54494, Oct. 22, 1993, effective Nov. 22, 1993; paras. (a) & (b) revised, paras. (c) & (d) added, 62 FR 53131, Oct. 10, 1997, effective Dec. 1, 1997; para. (a) revised, 69 FR 56481, Sept. 21, 2004, effective Oct. 21, 2004]

⁵ 35 U.S.C. §133 provides:

35 U.S.C. §133 Time for prosecuting application.

Upon failure of the applicant to prosecute the application within six months after any action therein, of which notice has been given or mailed to the applicant, or within such shorter time, not less than thirty days, as fixed by the Commissioner in such action, the application shall be regarded as abandoned by the parties thereto, unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that such delay was unavoidable.

petition.⁶

Delays in responding properly raise the question whether delays are unavoidable.⁷ Where there is a question whether the delay was unavoidable, Petitioners must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).⁸ And the Petitioner must be diligent in attending to the matter.⁹ Failure to do so does not constitute the care required under Pratt, and so cannot satisfy the test for diligence and due care.

(By contrast, unintentional delays are those that do not satisfy the very strict statutory and regulatory requirements of unavoidable delay, and also, by definition, are not intentional.¹⁰)

Allegations as to the Request to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment

The courts have determined the construct for properly supporting a petition seeking withdrawal of a holding of abandonment.¹¹ (See also: the Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c).¹²)

⁶ Therefore, by example, an unavoidable delay in the payment of the Filing Fee might occur if a reply is shipped by the US Postal Service, but due to catastrophic accident, the delivery is not made.

⁷ See: *Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice*, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53158-59 (October 10, 1997), 1203 *Off. Gaz. Pat. Office* at 86-87 (October 21, 1997).

⁸ See: In re Application of G, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989).

⁹ See: Diligence in Filing Petitions to Revive and Petitions to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment, 1124 *Off. Gaz. Pat. Office* 33 (March 19, 1991). It was and is Petitioner's burden to exercise diligence in seeking either to have the holding of abandonment withdrawn or the application revived. See 1124 *Off. Gaz. Pat. Office* supra.

¹⁰ Therefore, by example, an unintentional delay in the reply might occur if the reply and transmittal form are to be prepared for shipment by the US Postal Service, but other pressing matters distract one's attention and the mail is not timely deposited for shipment.

¹¹ See: Delgar v. Schulyer, 172 USPQ 513 (D.D.C. 1971).

¹² The Commentary at MPEP §711.03(c) provides:

* * *

B. Petition To Withdraw Holding of Abandonment Based on Evidence That a Reply Was Timely Mailed or Filed

37 C.F.R. §1.10(c) through §1.10(e) and §1.10(g) set forth procedures for petitioning the Director of the USPTO to accord a filing date to correspondence as of the date of deposit of the correspondence as "Express Mail." A petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment relying upon a timely reply placed in "Express Mail" must include an appropriate petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.10(c), (d), * (e), or (g) (see MPEP § 513). When a paper is shown to have been mailed to the Office using the "Express Mail" procedures, the paper must be entered in PALM with the "Express Mail" date.

Similarly, applicants may establish that a reply was filed with a postcard receipt that properly identifies the reply and provides *prima facie* evidence that the reply was timely filed. See MPEP § 503. For example, if the application has been held abandoned for failure to file a reply to a first Office action, and applicant has a postcard receipt showing that an amendment was timely filed in response to the Office action, then the holding of abandonment should be withdrawn upon the filing of a petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment. When the reply is shown to have been timely filed based

Moreover, the regulation requires that relief be sought within two (2) months of the act complained of.

Again, Petitioner appears not to have satisfied the delay/timing requirements described above.

As to Allegations
of Unavoidable Delay

The requirements for a grantable petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) are the petition and fee, a showing of unavoidable delay, a proper reply, and—where appropriate--a terminal disclaimer and fee.

It appears that Petitioner has satisfied the requirements of the regulation.

CONCLUSION

Because it appears that Petitioner has not satisfied the burdens set forth in Delgar v. Schulyer, the petition as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 hereby is dismissed, however, the instant petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is granted.

The instant application is released to Technology Center 3600 for further processing in due course.

While telephone inquiries regarding this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (571)

on a postcard receipt, the reply must be entered into PALM using the date of receipt of the reply as shown on the post card receipt.

Where a certificate of mailing under 37 C.F.R. §1.8, but not a postcard receipt, is relied upon in a petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment, see 37 C.F.R. §1.8(b) and MPEP § 512. As stated in 37 C.F.R. §1.8(b)(3) the statement that attests to the previous timely mailing or transmission of the correspondence must be on a personal knowledge basis, or to the satisfaction of the Director of the USPTO. If the statement attesting to the previous timely mailing is not made by the person who signed the Certificate of Mailing (i.e., there is no personal knowledge basis), then the statement attesting to the previous timely mailing should include evidence that supports the conclusion that the correspondence was actually mailed (e.g., copies of a mailing log establishing that correspondence was mailed for that application). When the correspondence is shown to have been timely filed based on a certificate of mailing, the correspondence is entered into PALM with the actual date of receipt (i.e., the date that the duplicate copy of the papers was filed with the statement under 37 C.F.R. §1.8).

37 C.F.R. §1.8(b) also permits applicant to notify the Office of a previous mailing or transmission of correspondence and submit a statement under 37 C.F.R. 1.8(b)(3) accompanied by a duplicate copy of the correspondence when a reasonable amount of time (e.g., more than one month) has elapsed from the time of mailing or transmitting of the correspondence. Applicant does not have to wait until the application becomes abandoned before notifying the Office of the previous mailing or transmission of the correspondence. Applicant should check the private Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system for the status of the correspondence before notifying the Office. See MPEP § 512.

* * *

272-3214, it is noted that all practice before the Office is in writing (see: 37 C.F.R. §1.2¹³) and the proper authority for action on any matter in this regard are the statutes (35 U.S.C.), regulations (37 C.F.R.) and the commentary on policy (MPEP). Therefore, no telephone discussion may be controlling or considered authority for Petitioner's action(s).



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¹³ The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.2 provide:

§1.2 Business to be transacted in writing.

All business with the Patent and Trademark Office should be transacted in writing. The personal attendance of applicants or their attorneys or agents at the Patent and Trademark Office is unnecessary. The action of the Patent and Trademark Office will be based exclusively on the written record in the Office. No attention will be paid to any alleged oral promise, stipulation, or understanding in relation to which there is disagreement or doubt.